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ABSTRACT

This report presents current information on: the goals that Southern Regional Education Board states have set for raising teacher salaries; lessons that states have learned about linking salary decisions to teacher performance and accountability; what states know about how competitive teacher salaries are; the implications of supply and demand factors for teacher compensation; state efforts to attract and retain quality teachers; and what states can do to relate improvements in teacher salaries to state priorities for education (e.g., continue to support salary goals, encourage good teachers to remain in teaching, systematically review supply and demand and teacher compensation, develop methods for determining whether teacher salaries in districts and the state are competitive, and develop a plan for tying salary decisions to student achievement and accountability). Three challenges most states face include: teacher shortages in certain subjects and areas, too few teacher education graduates going into teaching, and accountability programs calling for all children to learn at high levels, which raises the stakes for getting a quality teacher for every classroom. (SM)

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SREB

Teacher Salaries and State Priorities for Education Quality —

A Vital Link

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EDUCATIONAL BENCHMARKS 2000 SERIES

Goals for Education: Challenge 2000

BY THE YEAR 2000—

All children will be ready for first grade.

Student achievement for elementary and secondary students will be at national levels or higher.

The school dropout rate will be reduced by one-half.

90 percent of adults will have a high school diploma or its equivalent.

Four of every five students entering college will be ready to begin college-level work.

Significant gains will be achieved in the mathematics, sciences and communications competencies of vocational education students.

The percentage of adults who have attended college or earned two-year, four-year and graduate degrees will be at the national averages or higher.

The quality and effectiveness of all colleges and universities will be regularly assessed, with particular emphasis on the performance of undergraduate students.

All institutions that prepare teachers will have effective teacher-education programs that place primary emphasis on the knowledge and performance of graduates.

All states and localities will have schools with improved performance and productivity demonstrated by results.

Salaries for teachers and faculty will be competitive in the marketplace, will reach important benchmarks and will be linked to performance measures and standards.

States will maintain or increase the proportion of state tax dollars for schools and colleges while emphasizing funding aimed at raising quality and productivity.

The SREB Commission for Educational Quality, 1988

SALARIES

BY THE YEAR 2000—

Salaries for teachers and faculty will be competitive in the marketplace, will reach important benchmarks and will be linked to performance measures and standards.

- ☐ Competitive pay
- ☐ Rewards for outstanding performance
- ☐ Opportunities to grow in the teaching profession

Decisions about pay, rewards and professional opportunities largely will determine whether states develop the dedicated, well-qualified teaching force necessary to raise student achievement consistently. SREB states have set various goals for teachers' salaries — reaching the national or regional average or raising salaries by a certain amount. Some states also have recognized outstanding performance and expertise in critical areas with extra pay and have rewarded teachers who assume additional responsibilities. The costs to raise salaries are substantial — the cost of a 1 percent pay raise ranges from more than $3 million in Delaware to more than $91 million in Texas — but competitive salaries are essential to attract candidates into teaching who can meet goals for student learning and accountability.

Teacher Salaries and State Priorities for Education Quality — A Vital Link gives the latest information about:

- ☐ goals SREB states have set for raising teacher salaries;
- ☐ lessons learned about linking salary decisions to performance and accountability;
- ☐ implications of supply-and-demand factors for teacher compensation;
- ☐ state efforts to attract and retain quality teachers; and
- ☐ what states can do to relate improvements in teacher salaries to state priorities for quality.

Three major challenges face nearly every state:

- ☐ Teacher shortages exist now in some subjects and areas, and more shortages are projected.
- ☐ Too few teacher-education graduates go into teaching.
- ☐ Accountability programs call for all children to learn at high levels, and this raises the stakes for getting a quality teacher for every classroom.

Will SREB states meet these challenges? It is impossible to know. But what *has happened* over the last decade gives some reason for optimism. Over the last decade, SREB states have expanded dramatically their numbers of teachers, compared with the rest of the nation. In fact, almost half of the new teaching positions in America are in SREB states. These new teachers tend to be paid lower salaries, yet SREB states increased teacher salaries at virtually the national rate (44.3 percent for SREB states; 44.8 percent for the United States). This is a remarkable accomplishment.

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The need to raise teacher pay — and the commitment to do so — are reflected in recent state actions. North Carolina's 1999-2000 increase of 7.5 percent brought to 16 percent the increase in salaries over the last two years. Georgia has increased salaries 23 percent since 1995. This year, teachers in Mississippi are receiving pay raises averaging 8 percent, and teachers in Texas are getting $3,000 raises. For 2000-2001, Oklahoma already has approved a $3,000 pay raise for every teacher.

It is difficult to sustain competitive salary increases year in and year out, but several SREB states did so in the 1990s. Competitive salary increases — along with efforts to address teacher shortages, recognize superior performance or provide incentives for teachers to strengthen their professional skills — can go a long way toward attracting and retaining the most qualified candidates.

Mark Musick
SREB President

Teacher Salaries and State Priorities for Education Quality —

A Vital Link

Teacher quality is one of the top issues that state policy-makers have debated in the last year. New school-accountability programs have increased awareness of the need for well-prepared, dedicated teachers in the schools. This need is at the forefront of discussions because of existing and estimated teacher shortages and state efforts to tighten the qualifications of teachers. Efforts to reduce class sizes and provide additional support for children performing below their potential also are affecting the need for more and better-qualified teachers.

Unfortunately, traditional pay structures based solely on teachers' years of experience and educational degrees do little to support efforts to improve teacher quality, recruit teachers and retain teachers. These pay structures also do little to address teacher shortages in certain geographic regions or subject areas or to provide incentives for teachers to strengthen their professional skills. These issues point to the need to take a fresh look at how salary policies support — or do not support — state priorities for education.

Leaders in SREB states are seeking answers to questions that help them determine whether their salaries and benefits are competitive:

- What goals have states set for teacher salaries?
- What have states learned about linking teacher salaries to performance and accountability?
- What do states know about how competitive teacher salaries are?
- How do supply and demand affect teacher compensation?
- What are states doing to recruit and retain quality teachers?
- What more can states do to ensure that there is a well-qualified teacher in every classroom?

What goals have states set for teacher salaries?

Most SREB states adopted comprehensive educational reforms in the 1980s and 1990s and emphasized better pay for classroom teachers. Several states set goals for raising teacher salaries, but not all of these states took actions to improve teacher preparation or teacher quality as well. In fact, most salary goals do not take into account teacher quality or student performance. Arkansas, Kentucky, Mississippi and West Virginia have sought to raise the average

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This report was prepared by Gale F. Gaines, SREB director of legislative services.

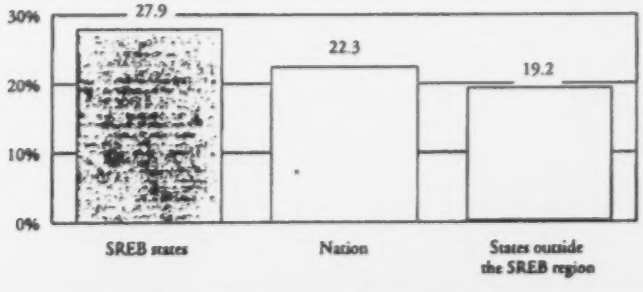
salary by a specific dollar amount or percentage over a period of time. Louisiana, Mississippi and South Carolina set the regional average as their goal. Alabama, Georgia and North Carolina set the national average as their goal. North Carolina, Oklahoma and Tennessee have focused on raising the salaries of beginning teachers. In Texas, pay raises for teachers are tied to the percentage of increase in per-student state appropriations; as the state spends more per student, the state's minimum salary increases at each level of experience.

When a state sets a goal to raise its average salary for teachers to the average of all states in the region or nation — a group of which it is a part — the pay raises contribute to raising further the average it seeks to achieve. This has the effect of making the goal a moving target. It takes tremendous commitment to raise salaries to the national or regional average. For example, the national average has increased by more than $1,000 each year during the last decade. Just keeping pace with this increase can cost a state tens of millions of dollars. Closing the gap costs even more.

In 1997, North Carolina began a comprehensive approach to reach the national salary average for teachers by directing increases to support the state's accountability program and efforts to attract and retain good teachers. The salary plan increases the minimum salary schedule and provides funds for mentor teachers, teachers with advanced or national certification, and teachers in schools that meet or exceed student achievement goals.

While emphasizing better pay for teachers in the last decade, SREB states also have supported astonishing growth in the numbers of teachers. SREB states — with more than one-third of the teachers in the nation — accounted for nearly half (45 percent) of the growth in the number of teachers nationwide. The national increase in teachers was 22 percent since 1988 because SREB states expanded their numbers of teachers by 28 percent, while the increase in the rest of the nation was only 19 percent. This growth means that SREB states are paying for 227,600 more teaching positions, which tend to be filled by new teachers who begin at entry-level salaries. This affects the state's salary aver-

Figure 1
Percent of growth in the numbers of teachers, 1988 to 1999



Source: National Education Association, *Rankings of the States*, various years.

Trends in average teacher salaries

	1989-90		1992-93		1995-96		1998-99
U.S.	$31,361		$35,017		$37,702		$40,582
SREB	27,534		29,920		32,372		35,808
MD	36,319	MD	38,753	MD	41,160	DE	43,164
DE	33,337	DE	36,217	DE	40,533	MD	42,526
VA	30,938	VA	32,257	VA	34,792	GA	39,675
FL	28,803	FL	31,172	GA	34,002	VA	37,502
GA	28,006	KY	31,115	FL	33,330	TN	36,500
NC	27,883	WV	30,301	TN	33,126	NC	36,098
TX	27,496	GA	30,051	KY	33,080	FL	35,916
SC	27,217	TX	29,935	WV	32,155	AL	35,820
TN	27,052	NC	29,315	TX	32,000	KY	35,526
KY	26,292	SC	29,224	SC	31,622	TX	35,041
AL	25,300	TN	28,960	AL	31,313	SC	34,506
LA	24,300	AR	27,433	NC	30,411	WV	34,244
MS	24,292	AL	26,953	AR	29,533	LA	32,510
OK	23,070	LA	26,102	OK	28,404	AR	32,350
WV	22,842	OK	25,918	MS	27,692	OK	31,107
AR	22,352	MS	24,367	LA	26,800	MS	29,530

Many factors influence changes in average salaries from year to year. These factors include the retirement of veteran teachers, the employment of new teachers, the addition of new teaching positions and pay raises. States' specific goals for teacher salaries result in changes to salary averages and rankings. Unfortunately, because these goals are expensive, states may reach or nearly reach a goal and then relax their efforts, only to be surpassed by other states that continue to push salaries upward. This can be seen by tracking the relative position of selected states' salary averages beginning with the years the goals were adopted:

Kentucky (1990): Raise salaries 15 percent in two years.

West Virginia (1990): Raise salaries by $5,000 in three years.

Arkansas (1991): Set up a trust fund to increase salaries.

Georgia (1995): Raise salaries to the national average.

North Carolina (1997): Raise salaries to the national average.

Sources: National Education Association, *Estimates of School Statistics*, various years; SREB state legislation.

age because these new teachers are paid about 65 percent to 70 percent of the average salary. Incredibly, SREB states still increased average salaries by 44 percent — nearly the same rate as the nation.

Meeting salary goals is expensive, but making salaries and benefits competitive with those of other occupations may be the only way to get enough well-qualified teachers into classrooms. States often find it difficult to balance the need for teacher pay raises with other demands for state resources. In many cases, states reach or nearly reach a goal but cannot sustain their efforts and are surpassed by other states that continue to push salaries upward.

What have states learned about linking teacher salaries to performance and accountability?

In most states, individual teachers' salaries are not based on student achievement or teacher performance. States have wrestled with the issue of paying teachers based on performance, additional responsibilities and expertise in critical areas. State accountability systems usually reward entire schools for the high performance and/or academic improvement of their students. ***All teachers*** in those schools receive rewards. Programs that reward ***individual teachers*** focus primarily on additional duties or higher levels of certification.

Florida has adopted a plan for performance pay for individual teachers. Legislation passed in 1999 requires local school boards to adopt salary schedules by June 2002 that will allow bonuses based on annual performance evaluations for school administrators, teachers and other instructional personnel (such as guidance counselors). Each person's performance will be measured through the district's annual evaluation that includes factors outlined in state law. Evaluations will consider student performance, classroom management skills, knowledge of subject matter and the ability to evaluate students' instructional needs. Under this plan, teachers and other certified staff who demonstrate outstanding performance will earn bonuses of 5 percent.

Several states in the SREB region and nationwide have experimented with various forms of incentive pay for teachers. In the early 1980s, several states tried career ladder programs and teacher incentive programs. The incentive programs rewarded teachers for taking on additional work, such as serving as mentors to other teachers. Career ladders allowed teachers to receive additional pay for evidence of increased competence in their performance.

Incentive programs in the 1980s were controversial from the start. The first and most fundamental issue was whether linking teacher evaluations to rewards was fair. It became clear very soon that the evaluations must be fair, must be perceived as fair and must be understood by teachers and others involved. The costs of the programs also became clearer — and higher — as states began approving budgets for the second and third years of the programs. While the costs of fully implementing the programs became a budget issue, the controversies over the perceived fairness of incentives based on evaluations were the reason for the eventual elimination of the programs. These programs often were seen as pitting teachers against one another for the limited funds allocated for rewards. The 1994 publica-

tion in the Southern Regional Education Board Career Ladder Clearinghouse series described several pitfalls associated with the merit pay programs tried in the 1980s:

> *"... incentives that were too small or that caused competition and discord among teachers; teacher evaluation that was suspect; awards that were limited to a few teachers; and the lack of teacher involvement in the program design and development."*

As a result of these experiences, states moved toward incentive programs that rewarded all teachers in schools that met student performance standards or other measures. These incentive programs were perceived as creating a more supportive and collegial atmosphere in the schools by encouraging strong teachers to help weaker ones.

More states are including school incentive programs in their comprehensive accountability systems that focus on student achievement, and states have worked to explain clearly the criteria for determining schools' eligibility. These programs generally reward schools that meet standards or improve student achievement significantly. Most programs — such as those in Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee and Texas — allow reward money to be used for teacher bonuses. Maryland and South Carolina specify that reward money cannot be used for salary bonuses. Arkansas, Delaware, Mississippi, Oklahoma and Virginia are developing incentive programs.

For these incentive programs to be effective, the rewards must be significant enough that teachers will believe they are worth the effort required to earn them. How much are teachers receiving through these programs? This is difficult to answer because most programs allow (but do not require) awards to be used for bonuses. Schools receive rewards based on an amount per teacher or per student, or each qualifying school receives an equal amount, but the funds are not always required to be spent on salaries. Where information about awards is available, teachers receive between $550 and $1,800 per year.

In North Carolina, teachers in schools that exceed performance expectations receive $1,500 apiece; those in schools that meet expectations receive $750. In 1998-1999, $100 million was available and teachers in 81 percent of schools received awards. Kentucky's program is being revamped, but in May 1999 a total of $26 million was distributed among teachers in nearly 79 percent of schools. Individual teachers received awards of between $555 and $1,100.

Some states are awarding salary bonuses to teachers but have little information about how many teachers are receiving bonuses or the size of the bonuses. Georgia, for example, does not require school systems to report how awards are spent. In November 1999, each of Georgia's 100 schools that qualified for awards received an average of $102,260 (a total of $10.2 million). The actual amount per school was based on $2,000 for each certified staff person (teachers, school administrators, librarians and counselors) assigned to the school. Just over 5,100 certified staff — 5 percent of the state's total — were in these schools. Based on information from some schools, teachers received from $1,200 to $1,800; the remaining funds went to support staff and to purchases of instructional equipment and materials. It is estimated that only a small number of schools put the full award into teacher bonuses.

Programs in Florida, Tennessee and Texas also permit salary bonuses. In Florida, 327 schools (about 13 percent of the state's schools) received rewards totaling $27.6 million and

averaging about $84,300 per school. Preliminary data from one-third of the schools show that about half of those are using some funds for salary bonuses. Texas allocates $5 million annually to its program, and Tennessee has $500,000 available each year. Schools in these two states receive small awards (in Texas, an average of less than $3,000; in Tennessee, about $4,500 per school).

What do states know about how competitive teacher salaries are?

Determining whether teacher salaries are competitive in the marketplace is difficult. Most states have not consciously defined "marketplace." "Competitiveness" of teacher salaries is determined — almost by default — by comparing the average salaries in a state with the salaries in other states or with regional or national averages for teacher salaries. These salary comparisons may be valid for some purposes, but they fail to recognize that state averages for teacher salaries do not show the *wide variations within states.* The differences in teacher salaries within a state can be greater than differences from one state to another. For example, the variation between the SREB state with the lowest average salary ($30,144) and the SREB state with the highest average ($44,061) is 46 percent. In one SREB state, the difference between the district with the lowest average ($26,364) and the district with the highest average ($49,559) is 88 percent.

State-to-state comparisons of average salaries also fail to consider variables that affect those averages. The "cost of living" varies from state to state as well as among regions and communities within states. The years of experience that a state's teachers have, their average degree level, the retirement patterns of teachers, and increases in the number of teaching positions in a state all affect the average salary. Questions also arise about the "real" value of salaries, considering variables such as personal tax payments and contributions by employers and teachers toward benefits such as retirement.

Defining "marketplace" often is a geographic issue. SREB studies in Kentucky, Oklahoma and Tennessee reveal that many graduates of teacher education programs find teaching positions near the college or university from which they graduate. South Carolina found that nearly 75 percent of new teachers are employed within 100 miles of the college they attended. This situation may create a surplus of teachers in one part of a state but does little to alleviate shortages in other areas.

Questions also arise about the "real" value of salaries, considering variables such as personal tax payments and contributions by employers and teachers toward benefits such as retirement.

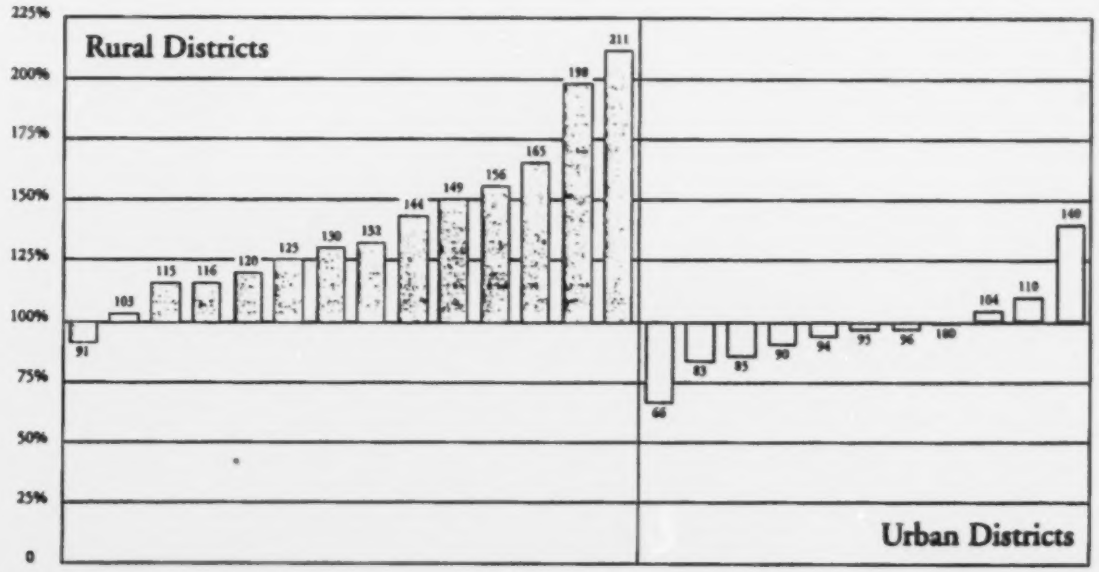
Mississippi is addressing geographic teacher shortages by offering teachers an allowance of $1,000 for moving expenses to move to an area where there is a teacher shortage. Teachers also can receive forgivable loans of up to $6,000 for a down payment on a house. The loan is "forgiven" after three years of teaching in the shortage area.

Districts with shortages also are offering incentives. In Maryland, for example, some districts have signing bonuses, low-interest loans for purchasing property and subsidized housing. Businesses and a foundation are renovating an apartment building in Baltimore to house new teachers for up to two years. Rent will be low, and teachers will have the opportunity to live with other beginning teachers as well as a few veteran teachers who will act as resident mentors.

A more systematic and difficult way for states to determine whether salaries for teachers are competitive is to compare teachers' salaries with salaries of workers in other fields in the community. This type of comparison is difficult because comparable salary figures for workers with college degrees by community are not readily available. Anecdotal information suggests that the average salaries of teachers in rural areas are above the averages for other workers in these areas and that the salaries for teachers in urban areas are lower than the averages for other workers.

This observation is supported by comparisons of teacher salaries in sample school districts with the median household incomes in the counties where those districts are located. In all but one of the 14 rural school districts in SREB states that were reviewed, the average

Figure 2
Teacher salaries as a percentage of median household income



Sources: SREB state departments of education; Government Information Sharing Project, Oregon State University.

salaries for teachers exceeded the median household incomes. Teachers in 10 of these rural districts were paid at least 120 percent of the median household incomes. The salaries of teachers in 11 urban districts were closer to the median household incomes than those in rural areas. Eight of these districts reported average salaries that were lower than the median household incomes. While comparing teacher salaries with median household incomes gives another perspective, it neither identifies an average salary per worker nor takes educational attainment into account.

SREB states have not set benchmarks for effectively comparing the salaries of teachers with those of other college graduates or of workers in other professions. In its annual survey of salary trends, the American Federation of Teachers includes several comparisons between teacher salaries and the salaries of those employed in other occupations. Nationally, teacher salaries are slightly more than the average salaries of all workers and government workers. Teachers are paid less than workers in selected white-collar occupations (such as accountants and engineers).

Another important finding in the report is that beginning teachers are offered lower salaries than are graduates in other fields who enter the work force. The average beginning salary for teachers is about 72 percent of the average beginning salary for college graduates in general. Salaries for beginning teachers were about 75 percent of the starting salaries in fields that require "similar education credentials" — such as accounting, sales/marketing, business administration and liberal arts fields.

A few SREB states have made special efforts to raise beginning salaries to attract more new teachers who are qualified. As part of North Carolina's 1997 goal to raise the state's average salary to the national average, minimum pay for new teachers will increase by nearly 20 percent — to $25,000 — by 2001. Similarly, Oklahoma achieved a goal set in 1990 to raise pay for beginning teachers 60 percent — to $24,060 — by 1995. Oklahoma has approved a pay raise of $3,000 for each teacher in 2000-2001 and will raise the state minimum-salary schedule.

A recent study by the Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama concluded that the beginning salaries of teachers in that state are higher than those in other states: Alabama ranked ninth nationally and first among SREB states. The study also found that Alabama's salaries are "front-loaded," meaning that the state provides a higher starting salary but smaller increases for years of experience. As a result, experienced teachers in some other states earn considerably more than those in Alabama.

It may be time for states to move beyond using state averages as the sole measure of whether teacher salaries are competitive. Policymakers need to consider salary goals in light of state priorities. If the state priority is to put a quality teacher in every classroom, state leaders need to look beyond the statewide average salary to determine whether there are roadblocks to achieving that goal:

- Are beginning salaries high enough to attract high-quality graduates, particularly in subject areas in which there are shortages?
- Do salaries, incentives and opportunities encourage the best teachers to remain in classrooms?
- Does your state determine when teachers are likely to leave their jobs (for example, after five years of teaching)? Are there salary adjustments to address these conditions?

How do supply and demand affect teacher compensation?

Studies of teacher supply and demand in nine SREB states (Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia) found the following:

- About half of a state's teacher-education graduates take teaching jobs in that state; of those who do become teachers, most do so within three years of graduation.
- Most beginning teachers get jobs in the area surrounding the college from which they graduate, making the supply of teachers vary greatly within the state.
- States have not been successful at recruiting and retaining minority teachers. In fact, the percentages of minority teachers have decreased over the last 10 years in most SREB states.
- The majority of teacher education graduates — and teachers — are white women.
- Teachers too often teach subjects for which they are not certified and for which they have had inadequate preparation.

These trends affect teacher compensation, but states so far have taken few steps to address these issues in setting salary goals. Statewide trends tend to mask what happens in local districts, and information about supply and demand in individual districts and schools is available in only a few states. Oklahoma and Tennessee have data collection systems that link information from K-12 and higher education to understand whether teacher education graduates are taking jobs as teachers and how long they are staying. Better data allow state leaders to make decisions that relate state priorities to the quality and compensation of teachers.

What are states doing to recruit and retain quality teachers?

States are using several strategies to recruit teachers. In addition to state recruitment programs — such as North Carolina's Teaching Fellows scholarship program, South Carolina's Teacher Cadet Program and Tennessee's effort to recruit minority teachers — several states have begun scholarships to draw college students into teaching. Georgia, Maryland, Mississippi and Texas have scholarships that address shortages in certain geographic areas or subjects. Maryland also provides $1,000 bonuses to teachers who graduate in the top 10 percent of their class and remain teachers for three years. The response to Mississippi's new scholarship program for teachers has exceeded projections. In its first year, 292 students received scholarships. In 1999-2000, the second year, there were 731 recipients.

North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas now allow retired teachers to return to the classroom and continue receiving their retirement benefits in addition to their salary. South Carolina expects this practice to ease shortages of qualified teachers in certain geographic areas and subjects. Teachers in Texas who have not retired early and have been retired for at least 12 months can return to the classroom in critical shortage areas without losing retirement benefits. In North Carolina, teachers who have been retired for at least 12 months can return

to teach in low-performing elementary and middle schools or in geographic areas where shortages exist.

States also are making efforts to keep good teachers in the classroom. These efforts recognize and reward veteran teachers and provide them with opportunities for additional professional growth. Several SREB states designate a small percentage of experienced teachers — usually less than 10 percent — to serve as mentors to new teachers or other veteran teachers. Mentor teachers, who are selected based on their experience and excellent teaching, usually receive additional pay. About half of SREB states support mentors and pay them annual bonuses ranging from $300 to about $1,000. In Florida, teachers who serve as mentor teachers and are certified by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards receive supplements equal to 10 percent of their salaries (in addition to the bonuses they receive for having National Board certification). Delaware and Mississippi also use teachers with national certification as mentors.

Teachers in the region have been extremely successful at attaining national certification: More than half (57 percent) of America's nationally certified teachers are in SREB states, while about one-third of the nation's teachers are in the region.

In addition to rewarding exceptional teachers and giving them opportunities for professional growth, mentor teacher programs provide much-needed support to new teachers, many of whom otherwise would leave teaching after a few years. An SREB study in the early 1990s revealed that one-third of new teachers left teaching after two years. In states that have data on such trends, only half of beginning teachers remained in classrooms after five years. These teachers are unlikely to return to teaching unless they do so within a year or two of leaving. Support systems that include mentors are critical to starting new teachers off on the right foot and keeping them in the profession.

Most SREB states encourage teachers to seek certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Teachers in the region have been extremely successful at attaining national certification: More than half (57 percent) of America's nationally certified teachers are in SREB states, while about one-third of the nation's teachers are in the region.

Four SREB states are among the national leaders in producing nationally certified teachers. Florida, Mississippi, North Carolina and Oklahoma account for 86 percent of the SREB region's 2,700 nationally certified teachers and nearly half of those in the nation. All four states provide significant support for teachers who gain certification. In Florida, nationally certified teachers receive annual bonuses equal to 10 percent of their salaries, and those in North Carolina get an extra 12 percent. Mississippi pays teachers an additional $6,000 each year for the 10-year life of the certificate, and Oklahoma pays teachers an extra $5,000 per year.

Teachers who are nationally certified are recognized as experts in their fields. Certification often leads to additional opportunities, such as assisting other teachers, designing professional-development programs, strengthening curriculum and acting as a general resource within their schools and districts. In most

Table 1
Nationally certified teachers in SREB states

State	Total Certificates Issued by Home State, 1999	State Incentives for Teachers with National Certification
Alabama	47	$5,000 annually for the life of the certificate
Arkansas	11	$2,000 upon certification; $2,000 annually for the life of the certificate (a total of $4,000 the first year)
Delaware	36	Annual bonus of 12 percent for the life of the certificate
Florida	570	Annual bonus of 10 percent of the prior year's average salary for teachers for the life of the certificate
Georgia	60	10 percent of the state portion of salary annually for life of the certificate (calculated once upon certification)
Kentucky	38	$2,000 annually for the life of the certificate
Louisiana	14	$5,000 annually for the life of the certificate
Maryland	27	State will match up to $2,000 the one-time or annual bonuses provided by local boards
Mississippi	356	$6,000 annually for the life of the certificate
North Carolina	1,260	12 percent of salary annually for the life of the certificate (calculated annually)
Oklahoma	151	$5,000 annually for the life of the certificate ($7,000 when spending per student reaches 90 percent of regional average)
South Carolina	39	$2,000 upon certification; annual bonus equivalent to the difference between state and national averages for teacher salaries
Tennessee	22	No monetary bonus provided by the state
Texas	15	No monetary bonus provided by the state
Virginia	70	$5,000 the first year; $2,500 annually for the remainder of the certificate
West Virginia	2	$1,000 annually for the life of the certificate

Sources: National Board for Professional Teaching Standards; SREB state departments of education.

SREB states, teachers receive annual bonuses ranging from $1,000 to $6,000 for the 10-year life of the certificate. Delaware and Georgia recently have increased their bonuses. Teachers with national certification in Delaware will receive annual bonuses of 12 percent, while those in Georgia will receive 10 percent annually. States also pay for at least part of the fees for seeking certification, which are about $2,000.

South Carolina plans to increase its number of nationally certified teachers; the governor wants to have 500 nationally certified teachers by 2002. Teachers in that state who get national certification receive the difference between the state's average salary for teachers and the national average salary — now about $6,000.

SALARIES

Some SREB states have started to provide incentives to teachers with expertise in subjects with critical shortages, and, in several new accountability programs, experienced teachers can earn additional pay and recognition by assisting low-performing schools. Georgia's reform legislation in 2000 requires the state Board of Education to identify schools and school systems where there are shortages of teachers in mathematics, science, special education or foreign language. The state board will request funds to provide teachers in those locations and fields with salary increases of up to one additional step on the state salary schedule. In 2000-2001, Florida will begin providing $1,200 bonuses to help the state retain the top teachers in mathematics, science and computer science.

Table 2
Estimated average salaries for teachers, 1998-99

	Average salary, 1998-99	Estimated change, 1997-98 to 1998-99
United States	$40,582	2.9%
SREB States	35,808	4.0
SREB states as a percentage of the nation	88.2%	
Alabama	$35,820	9.1%
Arkansas	32,350	2.4
Delaware	43,164	1.7
Florida	35,916	4.2
Georgia	39,675	5.6
Kentucky	35,526	2.6
Louisiana	32,510	8.0
Maryland	42,526	1.2
Mississippi	29,530	2.9
North Carolina	36,098	9.0
Oklahoma	31,107	1.4
South Carolina	34,506	2.4
Tennessee	36,500	3.3
Texas	35,041	2.7
Virginia	37,502	2.3
West Virginia	34,244	2.5

Source: National Education Association, *Rankings & Estimates: Rankings of the States 1999 and Estimates of School Statistics 2000*; state departments of education in Oklahoma and Virginia.

South Carolina allows teachers to qualify as teacher specialists in core subjects in low-performing schools. These specialists teach at least three hours per day and then work with other faculty. In addition to their salaries, they receive about $17,000 annually for up to three years. Kentucky's Highly Skilled Educators receive 135 percent of their regular salaries. These educators, most of whom are classroom teachers, work with low-performing schools and schools that are not making progress toward improvement goals. Louisiana is providing funds in 1999-2000 to support Distinguished Educators to assist in low-performing schools; these educators are paid 135 percent of their regular salaries. Alabama designates Special Service Teachers to assist low-performing schools. These teachers received $5,000 salary supplements in 1999-2000. In Florida, high-performing teachers who remain in the state's lowest-performing schools will begin receiving annual bonuses of up to $3,500 in 2000-2001.

Maryland, North Carolina and Texas provide incentives for teachers to seek an advanced state certificate. North Carolina teachers who qualify for the advanced/master's certificate receive 10 percent increases in their salaries. Maryland teachers with advanced certification who teach in low-performing schools receive salary supplements of $2,000. In Texas, teachers certified as master reading teachers receive supplements of $5,000. These teachers work with other teachers and students to improve reading.

What more can states do to ensure that there is a well-qualified teacher in every classroom?

State policy-makers and the public are demanding results for the financial investment in the public schools — the largest budget item in every state. Salary policies that promote improved student achievement and quality teaching play an important role in school improvement. State leaders can:

- **Continue to support salary goals** — SREB states have accomplished an incredible feat by supporting salary goals. During a time when SREB states dramatically expanded their numbers of teachers — adding more than 227,000 teachers regionwide who tend to be paid lower salaries — they also increased salary averages at nearly the same rate as states nationwide.
- **Take actions that encourage good teachers to remain in teaching and that find new ways to recognize quality teachers** — Many state actions are outlined in this and other reports. States should determine whether appropriate efforts are under way. Efforts such as mentor teacher programs and advanced certification programs provide increased opportunities for experienced teachers to grow professionally and allow these teachers' expertise to advance state priorities for quality.
- **Conduct systematic reviews of supply and demand and teacher compensation to determine whether policy changes are needed** — The Southern Regional Education Board helped several states conduct such reviews in the 1990s. Understanding districts' and schools' ability to attract and retain quality teachers will allow policy-makers to address specific problems. Data collection systems that link

data from higher education and K-12 will need to be improved to include analyses of districts or regions within states.

- **Develop a method for determining whether teacher salaries in districts and in the state are competitive so that salary decisions can address specific needs** — States should identify available information to support the definition of "competitive" and determine what other data are required.
- **Develop a plan for tying salary decisions to student achievement and accountability** — It is important to identify clearly the criteria that will be used for making these decisions. Fairness and consistency should be ensured in all decisions.

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